

□ *Legislation Would Pay Per Diem and Lodging for Family Members Caring for Vets* □

Washington, DC- Tuesday, Congressman Harry Teague announced that he has introduced legislation to assist family caregivers that accompany veterans when they have to travel to be seen by a doctor. HR 2378, the Veterans' Family Caregiver Assistance Act would expand the Department of Veterans' Affairs authority to make per diem and lodging payments to family members caring for veterans that are receiving medical treatment.

Family members are often responsible for transporting ailing veterans to and from doctor's appointments which takes most veterans an average travel time of two and a half to three hours.

"For many of the veterans in the 2nd Congressional District accessing the healthcare they have earned and deserve takes hours and often times days away from home," said Congressman Harry Teague, a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. "The legislation I've introduced would give our veterans more transportation options when traveling to see a doctor as well as ease some of the costs incurred by family caregivers during travel."

The legislation was introduced after a series of meetings Congressman Harry Teague held with veterans while traveling throughout New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District. In addition to in person meetings, Congressman Harry Teague also held a Tele-Town Hall to get input, feedback and ideas for legislation that will best help them receive the medical care and benefits they have earned and deserve.

"I worked for and earned a seat on the Veterans' Affairs Committee because addressing the veterans community's concerns and needs is a top priority for me," said Congressman Harry Teague. "Staying in touch with our veterans both when I am in Washington and when I am back home helps me develop legislation like the Caregivers Assistance act to address a problem that many of our veterans are currently struggling with."

The New Mexico Department of Veterans' Affairs (NMDVA) estimates that approximately 56,000 veterans in New Mexico have to be transported to a Veterans' Hospital annually.

Currently, the only option for family caregivers to stay overnight with loved ones that are receiving medical treatment is to apply to stay in one of the 27 beds offered at the Veterans' hospital. Renting a hotel room at their own expense is often times cost prohibitive for family caregivers as well.

The bill has been assigned to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.